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Joan Digby

LIU Post, Joan.Digby@liu.edu

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Founders Award Remarks

JOAN DIGBY

LIU Post

I am extremely honored to receive the NCHC Founders Award. The introduction that Richard Badenhausen made, quoting from Jeff Portnoy's letter on my behalf, was too overwhelming for me to grasp. It is not like me to be emotional or speechless, but this is how I feel.

In listening to the other awards made in the name of Sam Schuman and Ron Brandolini, I think back to those people who were friends over the decades that I have spent in honors. Sam was the greatest leader of this organization, and I can remember my last meeting with him in New Orleans at Café du Monde, when he reflected on his lifelong attachment to our organization without ever letting on that this was likely the end. I can still remember my shock and sadness when Sam died. Ron Brandolini hosted my reception for new directors at the conference I ran in Orlando. He was instrumental in bringing two-year honors programs into prominence in NCHC, and his genial spirit made that day an exceptional event. Acknowledging current leaders with awards named for such legendary figures—John Zubizarreta for the Sam Schuman Award and Eddie Weller for the Ron Brandolini Award—honors our history, present, and future. Both recipients are essential members

of our organization who contribute more than we can acknowledge in a ceremony. I am proud to work with them.

To be named as a “Founder” also makes me want to acknowledge Bernice Braid and Ada Long, my mentors and inspirations in NCHC. I first became an active part of this organization because I heard their presidential addresses, as well as the address of Jocelyn Jackson, whose words convinced me that I wanted to commit myself to this organization. Throughout my academic career—going into my fiftieth year at Long Island University—no disciplinary organization, MLA included, has ever attracted me. Only in NCHC did I find a warm group of academic colleagues without hierarchy or competition. NCHC was inviting from the start and has remained so for forty years.

I believe that the average tenure of an honors director is three years. I have always been astounded by this fact and want to tell all of you to stay with the job. Don’t leave and go back to a department or on to higher administration. After four decades at LIU, I am still having fun. I write for our journals and serve on an editorial board. I am teaching a new course on drones and finding new ways to teach, invent, and enjoy working with honors students. Stick with honors. Students, you too should think about professions that will bring you back to honors education as faculty or administrators.

NCHC and honors education have grounded my professional life, and I’m not through yet. Thank you for honoring me with the Founders Award. I am more grateful than you can know.

Joan Digby may be contacted at

Joan.Digby@liu.edu.